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Tyler Brown Abstract and Synthesis

Abstract

Chapter 3 of FIAE begins to discuss assessment and different ways that it can be harnessed in a positive way. Wormeli describes that there are 3 major categories of assessment that should all be integrated into a unit in order to provide full understanding of the students prior knowledge, progressing knowledge, and level of mastery once the unit is complete. These three categories of assessment include pre-assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment respectively. The importance of differentiating assessment is also expressed in the chapter. Details about common errors or pitfalls in assessment are put forth in order to provide a better understanding of the most effective ways to assess.

Synthesis

The public educational system seems to have somehow inadvertently put an extremely negative stigma on the word “assessment”. The word alone can bring students to their knees. Our government adversely pushes for more assessment as our global rank in educational development slides down the charts. Two factions of left and right have debated the topic for decades discussing whether it’s better to hold teachers, students, or entire administrations accountable for failures. But alas, Devin shows us that there is light at the end of the tunnel when he says, “I found this chapter to be really beneficial in its ability to take the negative connotation away from the topic of assessment”, and remove negativity we shall.

By addressing the three forms of assessment and making clear to the students the purpose of what they are doing during all three phases, we are able to provide them a better picture of why assessment can be beneficial. Meghan summed this up perfectly when she said: “This means that students are more willing to put in the work to understand the concept when they are able to understand a clear point or reason for needing to learn the information”. Starting with pre-assessment, teachers can get a better picture of where each individual’s abilities are before determining where and how they will start instruction. For student’s, pre-assessment allows them a sneak peek into what they will be learning over the course of the year. Ms. Libby touched on this idea as well by explaining, “it will be exciting to learn the answers since they will want to strive to get the correct answers so their grade on the test will be shown as improvement”. But recognizing that the world, particularly the field of education is not always utopian in nature, she elaborated with this important concept that we should not forget “There are many factors that can influence someone’s day and it will affect everything they do. If we penalize the students because of one test or quiz they did badly on, than we are not letting them show up their true potential”.

Formative assessment seems to be what most of us were least familiar with prior to these readings. Without formative assessment throughout the curriculum however, there is no way for teachers to be certain about where their student’s level of mastery is and where they could use improvement.

“Too many teachers have a proclivity toward a know-it-all bravado... it is important to keep ourselves in [check](#)...” – Cole

I know that some of us “warriors” are subconsciously inclined toward this kind of behavior since it allows us to avoid prior planning and teach in the moment based off our intuition, but recognizing the possible failures of that method of teaching is extremely important. Besides how formative assessment can be used to help the teacher, however, there are ways in which a student may benefit from it as well. Formative assessments can be used in portfolio’s that display a sort of timeline of learning for the students. When a

student is able to reflect on and be conscious of their ability to learn new information, they become more confident in their ability to tackle new information, and may even develop better strategies to internalize it.

Lastly, summative assessments provide a final reflection on whether or not the student is meeting the course goals. This process can either go entirely wrong and ruin all of the hard work everyone has put in during the course of the unit, or it can go extremely well and students will be filled with pride and confidence to move forward and accomplish more goals. This all depends on how well we are able to clearly outline the goals of the unit within the questions of the test, and how well we are able to [differentiate](#) assessment in order to appeal to all of the MI's in the classroom. There is no sense in committing to MI theory when doing lessons and activities and then drop the ball when it comes time to assess. It is also important that prior to this time, students have been provided real-world examples of why understanding the core principles are important in real life. I am pleased to hear from Matt that his goal as an educator includes this: "I will make sure to talk about, and show my students how they can apply what they are learning to real life practices". Isn't this familiar? I would like to point out that Matt knew this before even coming in to class yesterday.

Michael Diffin

The third chapter in Fair Isn't Always Equal is about the successful assessment of the students in our classrooms. We must incorporate all of the aspects we know about differentiated instruction into the use of assessment. It is important to also include a good deal of understanding by design and start from the bottom, what are the desired results? It should be known to the students what they are going to be required to learn. This book even takes it to giving the students the final exam on the first day and just in detail explain everything that they are going to need to know about the classes and information to come. With the differentiation there is also essential and enduring knowledge that must be communicated alongside the differentiation. After deciding what is necessary for the students to learn we must figure out what level the students are on to receive this knowledge. This is to show us to which extent do we need to differentiate. We must then., after figuring out the essential goals and student readiness, design the types and styles of assessment. There are three types of exams, pre-, formative, and summative but there are many ways to chance and differentiate these.

Cheyenne

during the summative assessment. Hopefully, if changes needed to be made in your teaching style, they have been done before too many students have fallen below the "average" mark in the graduate school.

Ashley Godbout

I learned there are three different types of assessment: pre-assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment. This chapter explained the importance of all three and how to successfully integrate them into a unit. The pre-assessment assists the teacher in lesson planning and unit design. Keeping it as short and to the point as possible, pre-assessment questions should come from the summative assessment. Using skills and concepts students must show mastery in at the end of a unit make

for appropriate pre-assessment questions so teachers can see before and after readiness. Formative assessments are given throughout a unit; they are building up to the summative assessment. These are useful because students can gain from the feedback and learn what they do or don't understand. Teachers can use formative assessments as checkpoints and decide to move on in the unit or spend more time on a concept their students don't understand. The author puts it perfectly when he says, "...[when teachers] focus around students' summative experiences, we miss critical opportunities to positively affect learning (28)". We must give student's opportunities to perform throughout the unit, not just at the end. By this time it's too late. Summative assessments happen at the end of a unit and reflect the essential and enduring knowledge students have met. After giving information about assessments, the author states a 12 step plan to differentiate a lesson. This chapter impacts my teaching and classroom because I have learned that assessments should advance learning not document it. Assessments are evidence that our students' understand the essential goals and knowledge. We must prepare them for summative assessments, but not teach just to test knowledge. This doesn't show advancement, progress or mastery, this just teaches them to memorize the material for the test then forget what they've learned the next day.

Tyler Michaud

The third chapter of *Fair Isn't Always Equal*, by Rick Wormeli, focused on the usage of assessments in a healthy manner. Throughout the chapter many topics were covered including: assessments, differentiated instruction, and determining readiness/ essential understanding. Three types of assessment were discussed: pre-assessments (to check for prior understanding and knowledge), formative assessments (checkpoints that help monitor retention and understanding of information), and summative assessments (final exams that assess mastery). By strategically placing these three types of assessments the teacher can develop a greater understanding of the classes knowledgeability before, during, and after a lesson. Assessments can provide the teacher some perspective on where a specific lesson was successful.

Personally, I think assessments are a double-edged sword; on the one hand, they can be helpful in understanding class-wide (not individual) mastery, however it seems a nearly impossible feat to create an exam that is fair to everybody. Likewise, if the teacher does not use the exam to better themselves than it is a waste of time. As a teacher, I am pretty certain that I would provide exams, however they would not weigh nearly as much most. When a teacher makes an exam weigh thirty percent or more of the students' grades I think it is basically asking for failure, not only is the exam most likely not accessible to all learning styles, but then you must consider outside factors that the students bring into the classroom (emotions, hours of sleep, etc). Assessments are great check-points and a decent way for the teacher to reflect on themselves, but I would argue that they are not an accurate way to judge individual mastery of materials.

Matt Potter

This chapter discusses something that I see vital in education. Assessment through differentiation can be a

difficult thing to do. One thing the book portrays is that if a teacher cannot assess themselves and their students, then there won't be much room for growth and improvement as an educator. Assessing student mean observing their actions, educationally, as well as their behavior. Seeing the good and the bad is very important. As teachers we must design curriculums that allow us assess our students frequently, and in multiple ways. By failing to do this we will have students who don't understand information, and it will negatively affect their learning.

Someday as a teacher I will assess all of my students fairly and equally. I will set up a clear environment for m students. Expectations will be clear from the start, and students will work toward a set target of understanding. I plan to assess my students in multiple ways, and regularly. This will allow me to give my students feedback and positive suggestions regularly. Before assessing I will provide my student with numerous activities to build their understandings. I will make sure to talk about, and show my students how they can apply what they are learning to real life practices. This will hopefully grab their attention, and make them more interested in what they're learning.

Christopher Vogel

Chapter 3 begins by making the point that students come into the classroom biased as to how they learn and perceive information. The author makes the point that splitting students into groups is critical beyond interrupting the mundane classroom routine. This impacts me because I should be aware how students work together and how they can benefit from different groupings. Incorporating EEK and KUD into my classroom will be important because it follows the idea of the last few chapters. Students should know the subject, understand the subject and be able to practically use the information they have learned.

Pre-assessment is important for finding the goals that I would need to teach in the classroom. The book describes a summative assessment which reflects all that we deem important to know for the class and are given at the end of the lesson. This assessment is used for the teacher to check for understanding but also for the student to put into perspective the material they have learned and connect it to issues and problems. The formative assessment is used to check the status of a student's learning throughout the semester and to make sure they are hitting important checkpoints. One comment in the reading is that the students should not have adult level proficiency with the material in the class. I feel this impacts me because while I would expect the best out of my students, I should not expect all of them to master the course material completely by the end of the semester.

Cole Phillips

Chapter three of Rick Wormeli's *Fair Isn't Always Equal* details the various types of assessment typically used in the classroom. Wormeli suggests that students are biased upon entrance to the classroom, and must learn to adapt to classroom style and, specifically, to assessment.

He explains the ideas of pre-assessment, formal assessment, and of summative assessment, which are all fairly typical of any classroom. Pre-assessment, as is explained, is the concept of understanding a student's basic understanding of the given content prior to beginning a lesson. Formal assessments are regular tests or other forms of checking for retention and general learning. Summative assessments typically take the form of final exams and test for masterful understanding.

While the chapter once again stresses mastery of content and some concepts with which I wholeheartedly

disagree, it makes the point that teachers also must assess themselves, which is vital to the educational process and its potential to be effective. Too many teachers have a proclivity toward a know-it-all bravado, whether outspoken about it or just implying it, and it is important to keep ourselves in check and to recognize that our real reason for being in the classroom is not to flaunt a degree, to talk about past experience, or otherwise give the students reason to bow down. While the chapter focuses primarily on differentiated means of assessment for students, and ensuring that all students reach a point of mastery, it's most important message, to me, may be its most minute: we must assess our teaching acumen, and we must do so regularly.

Ashley Libby

This chapter discussed many different topics within differentiated instruction and assessment. It showed that it is very important for the students to know what the point of the curriculum is. They should know what they are supposed to learn first before any lessons even start. The book gave an example of how to show the students the end game of their subject. If students are given the final assessment/test before they even start lessons, than whenever they learn something new it will jog their memory back to the assessment. They will know that the idea is important to know and something they will be tested on since they already had a sneak preview of the final assessment. For the students it will be exciting to learn the answers since they will want to strive to get the correct answers so their grade on the test will be shown as improvement. The book emphasized expectations of the students and the teacher. Students should know what is expected of them before the class so that they have an idea of how the next year or semester will play out. If they know and understand the expectations, than they won't have to try to guess as the year progresses.

As a teacher I must make sure my students know what is expected of them before I start the lessons. I must also remember that no one is ever always on their game every day, all day. If students are doing great throughout the week but when it is time for the test, some might do worse than if they were having a better day. There are many factors that can influence someone's day and it will affect everything they do. If we penalize the students because of one test or quiz they did badly on, than we are not letting them show up their true potential. We are not letting them show us how well they can do when it is a good day. That is why many assessments are needed throughout the year so they can be second chances for some students and a progression indicator for others. Without this, I would not be assessing my students fairly and letting them show me what they can really accomplish.

Russell Warren

From a discussion on differentiated instruction and what it can do, Rick Wormeli's book now turns to a more concrete subject: assessment. It is not enough to write up a quick test and hand that out to students, expecting them to all succeed admirably. Not only do they have different levels of experience and mastery, but the students enter our classrooms with an already developed way of taking in and understanding material, which our tests could completely and totally oppose. Pre-assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments are all important in understanding the students. This suggests that the classroom is a constantly changing place, where students are routinely checked on the various

aspects of knowledge. It's not enough to through them the material then have them take one summative test - to make sure we're doing our best as teachers to ensure total mastery on a subject, we must constantly check in on the progress out our students.

This is a lot of work, and I'm worried that it's nearly impossible to benefit all the students, all the time. Yes, it's important to create a constant quizzing of the students, but how can I possibly edit and work every single one of my tests and quizzes to each student's learning styles and capabilities? Is it enough that my classroom has desks arranged in a circle? Most likely not. But I can try my hardest, constantly, and discuss with the students if I feel their needs aren't being met enough. This should be a constant give-and-take between the students and the teacher, so even if the assessment doesn't meet their needs, their voices are at least being heard and their worries and suggestions are taken into account.

Meghan Hughes

Students easily build up a bias towards certain content areas in school. This bias can occur for several reasons; students may not have achieved success in a certain area, may have had a bad experience with a teacher, or may just not have enjoyed a certain topic within that content area. All of these situations are situations we as teachers will have to face in our classrooms. Rick Stiggins said, “students can hit any target they can see and which stands still for them.” This means that students are more willing to put in the work to understand the concept when they are able to understand a clear point or reason for needing to learn the information. This general understanding of student’s desire for reason will help to influence the success of a certain lesson within a classroom. Showing the students the end result will make the lesson that much more real to them. By showing students the final exam on a particular topic may help them to understand what it is they are supposed to be getting out of the lesson, and that the lesson as a whole does have a purpose. Additionally, it is the role of the teacher to understand the main concepts of a unit, and what lessons will be essential to teaching the information. When a student understands that the teacher has taken the time to carefully select assignments to help them achieve the ultimate goal, they will be much more likely to want to do well on the assignment and to really understand the information.

Tyler Brown

Alas! The truth is revealed and No Child Left Behind is appealed! This third chapter of FIAE explores the understanding that an individual’s level of proficiency, as well as the representation of school-wide success, cannot be accurately depicted by “snap-shot” or single-shot assessment. Unfortunately, as teacher’s struggle to cover a vast curriculum, they can fall short of their goals in differentiating assessment in order to cover all the content in time for an upcoming exam. Through consistent application of differing forms of assessment (pre-assessment and formative assessments), however, students and teachers alike are able to identify what requirements need to be met in order to achieve the overall goal of mastering the content BEFORE the deadline or summative assessment occurs. It is important to be clear about what those end goals are in the beginning, however, or else the process of obtaining proficiency throughout the unit becomes confusing and unclear for the students. How many times have you requested extra help or an extension of a due date on an assignment or test only to be smacked by a remark from your teacher such as: “I cannot allow any extra time on this assignment or test because I am preparing you for the real-world.” This type of response assumes that during the ages of adolescence, it is fair to be held to the same standard as adults. Besides the obvious ignorance in that, the “real world” actually does include extensions of professional projects in order to meet standards of quality in a finished project or

product. Similarly, quality education cannot be achieved without consistent monitoring (formative assessment) and effective adjustments to the lesson based on the information gathered (differentiated instruction).

Devin Boilard

Harvard brings up a great point in the introduction of Chapter Three, he states that our students arrive in our classrooms not as "blank slates" but rather as "broadly informed individuals." The starting point for each of our students will be different, it impact to both skill level and content familiarity, and they will proceed at varying speeds. It is crucial that we as teachers are aware of each students standing in order to properly support and challenge them. It is with this tool of assessments that we can capture tangible evidence of individual ability. When creating an assessment it is crucial that we first ask ourselves what it is that we are trying to measure and what data the evidence we are looking for consist of? To better measure the process after these questions have been answered (assess) offers three categories of responses. First pre-assessments, these are original questions that allow teachers to gain an idea of a students skill standing in the subject matter and what strength or weaknesses they "right process." Secondly, these are formative assessments that test for a students knowledge of a topic and carry weighted grades, usually formative. These assessments can be both formative and summative which allows them to be formative in nature and occur throughout the unit. The

do not carry grades.

I found this chapter to be really beneficial in its ability to take the negative connotation away from the topic of assessment. Worried states on page 22, "Too often, educational tests, grades, and report cards are treated by teachers as trophies when they should be viewed as products." An assessment that proves an inadequate level of comprehension should not be used to discipline or humiliate a student this success but should be treated as a failure, an opportunity to reflect and proceed on the path of success. It is important that we use assessments as the tools that they are and not as a defining factor, learning is the goal, not an A.
